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# CAMION LETTERS

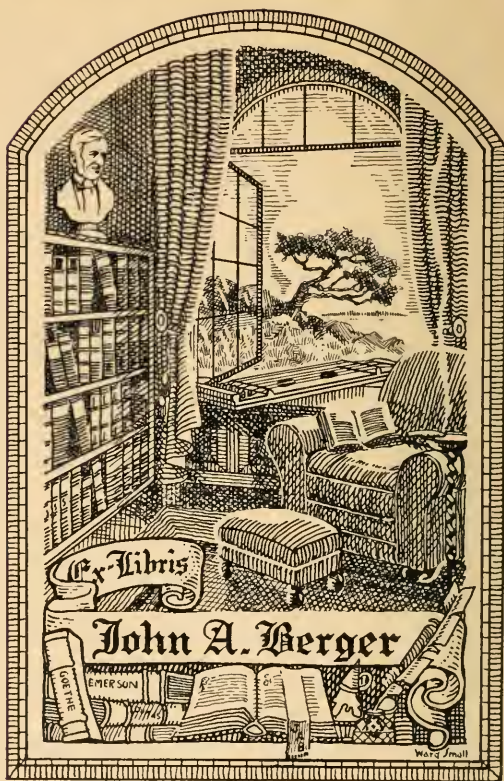
FROM

MEN IN THE AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE

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John Berger, Jr.  
1918.









**CAMION LETTERS**  
**FROM**  
**MEN IN THE AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE**



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# CAMION LETTERS

FROM AMERICAN COLLEGE MEN

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS

OF THE

AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE

IN FRANCE, 1917

*" . . . Duty, and the bit more which counted . . . "*



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1918

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## INTRODUCTION

THIS is a volume of letters written by young Americans who as members of the American Field Service volunteered to drive the heavy transport trucks, or *camions*, of the French Army. Most of the letters are from the Cornell men who formed the larger part of the first section of drivers assigned to the transport work. The straightforward letters are self-explanatory, but it is in place to introduce them by a few words telling of the way the Service engaged in the transport of war materials.

The record of the American ambulances in France is well known. *Friends of France*, *Ambulance No. 10*, and the *Diary of Section VIII* have given to English-speaking readers the story of young American volunteers in France doing their duty to the cause they had voluntarily chosen and doing it so well as to win for them citation after citation in the French orders of the day, and the *Croix de Guerre* that often accompanied the citation. More than one hundred

young American collegians wear this simple cross, which comes to no recreant. That these young men were representative of the Service is proved by the fact that French Generals vied among themselves to have the American *ambulanciers* attached to their divisions. It is a record of which the Service is proud and of which America may well be proud.

In May, 1917, the Paris authorities of the American Ambulance Field Service in France were requested by the French Government to take over as much as was feasible of the transport work of one of the French Armies. In the French forces there are 80,000 motor vehicles driven, as far as France can make it possible, by men whose age or physical condition unfits them for active service at the front. To release these men meant to replace them with American volunteers and to send back one by one to their farms or to Governmental offices veteran Frenchmen whose services were needed elsewhere than on the trucks. The request, highly honoring to the Service, came partly as the result of the great need of the French for additional *camionneurs*, or drivers of heavy trucks, and partly because a temporary shortage

of ambulances threatened to leave in idleness some of the young American volunteers just arriving in Paris.

The Service gladly took on the new work and made a prompt appeal to the men on hand. Although they had come over to drive ambulances, most of them appreciated the new need and volunteered for the transport work. A training camp was at once established, and after a brief but adequate period of drill in handling the heavy vehicles on difficult roads, the first transport section set out for the front, carrying the first American flag authorized to be borne in this war. As it happened, most of the forty men in the section were from Cornell, and at the head was a Cornell man, Edward Tinkham, who had already won his Cross of War in ambulance work by "his untiring devotion under the violent fire of the enemy." Conformably to its new function the Service changed its name to The American Field Service and sent out a call for volunteers in this country.

Naturally a transfer of so much consequence could not be accomplished without some difficulties. On the part of the volunteers it involved a change of purpose not to be lightly under-

taken. Men who had gone over animated by zeal to perform humane services felt that to drive munition trucks was a departure from their original purpose. Some solved the problem in a plain, soldierly spirit, saying that what France wanted was clearly the thing for them to do. Others held strongly to their original idea. Moreover, although prompt information of the new arrangements was sent to all officers recruiting for the Service, there was obvious difficulty in getting to all the oncoming volunteers an explicit understanding of the new situation. A further question arose in respect of those men whose expenses had been contributed in whole or in part during the campaign for the support of the ambulance service. Some of these men obtained from the contributors permission to transfer, some went on with the ambulance work, and some, accepting war conditions as the supreme law, transferred to the new branch, assuming that their action would be approved at home, as it almost invariably was.

On this side of the water a great deal of confusion arose through misunderstandings, slowly to be cleared up by incessant correspondence. In



general there was difficulty in realizing that the Service had no control over the necessities of war, and that it was trying to meet an emergency practically. To have answered all the incoming questions fully and personally would have meant a practical abandonment of the work of the Service in its offices and a commandeering of all the office staffs for typewriting. Printed material was copiously used, however, and gradually the situation cleared up.

Meantime a new trouble appeared. Of late the very word ambulance had been a thing to conjure with. The desire to relieve the sufferings of the wounded had a splendid emotional quality, and now at the very time when ambulance delivery was being held up in France, American gifts for ambulances poured in. It was a hard, ungracious task to be compelled to decline or postpone the acceptance of the one thing that had been the very heart of the Service. It was a still harder task to persuade many of the generous donors that their gifts were urgently needed to develop the new branch of the Service. There is at first thought little spiritual appeal in a transport truck, little call for skill and initiative on

the part of its driver. Yet the reverse is the case. The trucks are the backbone of the army and the driver pilots them over shell-swept roads with all the incident risks of motor troubles. Had motor car owners stopped to reflect upon what their feelings would be if instead of changing their tires or inspecting their spark plugs on a macadamized American road, they could see shells bursting near them on a devastated highway of France, they would never ask, as some did, the cool question about truck driving in France, "Is this the work for a patriotic American youth with red blood in his veins?"

It would not be fair, however, to give the impression that taking over the transport work nullified the Service's appeal for funds. The friends of the Service maintained their firm faith that instead of doing something alien to its original purpose the Service was only reaching out and making itself even more useful to France. Indeed, in some quarters a desire to contribute first arose with the knowledge that our transport men were bearing our flag as combatants and not using the protection of the Geneva Red Cross.

But still the fact remained, and remains, that

the transport service makes far less an appeal to the heart than to the brain, and that the heart has to be touched before the purse strings loosen.

Yet this transport work of the army is an absolutely indispensable part of the force that makes for victory. The *camions* carry from the depots to the front supplies for trench-making, road-repairing, and bridge-building. They carry equipment for the divisions, and food for the men. They carry the troops themselves when reserves have to be rushed to a point of attack. And they carry the ammunition on which depends the barrage fire and the great offensives. "An army," said Napoleon, "travels on its belly." This vivid statement of the imperative value of the commissary needs now to be supplemented and enlarged—even without the imperial imagery—to include the transportation of all that a modern army requires.

The *camionneurs* who carry on the transport work realize the responsibility of their task, and they meet its dangers as true soldiers. The job is a man's job, and calls for courage as well as skill. It calls for initiative in the emergencies which constantly occur. It is no humdrum task of

driving heavy trucks in a slow procession along a quiet road. There is nothing humdrum in driving under artillery fire. It is, as the men at the steering-wheels know, an imperative duty and a high privilege, and there is no good quality a man possesses which does not find free play in the daily task.

The men in the transport branch of the Service have of course written many letters home, and some of these letters have been passed over by their recipients to the American headquarters. The letters were written without thought of publication, but it has seemed proper to make out of them a small volume whose general purpose is to make known the character and activities of the transport service. The letters speak for themselves,—frank, boyish recitals of daily routine and of occasional exciting experience. Between the lines of the letters may be clearly read a heartening thing,—the growth of high-spirited natures out of boyhood to a man's stature.

MARTIN W. SAMPSON

*Cornell University*

## **CAMION LETTERS**



## CAMION LETTERS

### I

*A Bord le "Chicago" 25th April, 1917.*

WE are safe at last in the mouth of the harbor of the Garonne. Bordeaux is about forty miles up the river. We got here at ten this morning, and have been anchored ever since, waiting for the high tide. We hope to arrive at Bordeaux at 8 p. m., and at Paris some time tomorrow.

It is a great relief to be here at last, with land nearby. Last night was a pretty anxious time. No smoking was allowed on deck after dark, and all lights were put out early. We were rather lucky to get here safely, for this morning one of the French officers told us that two ships near us had been sunk, one by a mine, he thought, the other by a submarine. There are lots of other ships in the harbor, but none as big as ours. Most of the ships are waiting to go through to the Mediterranean, as there is a canal right across the country.

The red tape has started again. This morning we had to have our passports examined again by some men who came on board, and we are now waiting for customs officers to come and inspect our bags. . . .

The inspectors have passed safely, and we are on our way up the river. Flat, green meadows and towns on one side, and very low white cliffs on the other. The spring seems to be considerably ahead of the American spring. We can see the towns and the people very plainly. At present we are stuck in the mud, and do not seem to be able to get off. The tide is coming in, however, so we will be floating again shortly, I hope.

By the way, one of the ships sunk was a Swedish steamer, two hours ahead of us. When we got the news by the wireless the Captain stopped the ship and lay quiet for an hour, then went on. It is lucky now that we could not go any faster, or we might have met the submarine instead. We are going to spend the night in Bordeaux, and go on to Paris tomorrow.



## II.

*Paris, April 29, 1917.*

WE are now staying at the house at 21 rue Raynouard. It is a very old stone building on a little street in Passy, in the western part of the city. The house is built right on the street, but back of it the grounds run down almost a quarter of a mile, as far as a road on the bank of the Seine, so we have a beautiful view of the river. All the completed ambulances are kept in these grounds. Of course the grounds are not kept up carefully, but they are very pretty nevertheless. They feed us here very well—much better than at college. There is more than enough of every kind of food except sugar and butter, and we can use very little of that. When you buy food here, it does not cost any more than in the United States, and some things are less.

Yesterday I went down town to buy some things such as duffle bag, uniform, and equipment, and stopped in the Madeleine. This afternoon I am going to see Notre Dame. We are in a

very convenient location for sight seeing, being only a couple of blocks from the Metro. The Eiffel Tower is less than a mile off, and there are a lot of municipal buildings near it. However, no one is allowed to go near it, so I have only seen it from a distance.

I am getting so that I can understand French a little better, but that is not very well. However, I do not have any trouble getting around, or getting what I want to eat or buy.

I do not know when we will leave for the front, but it will not be for a couple of weeks. I must stop, as I want this letter to catch the "Chicago" mail.

### III

*May 10, 1917.*

Lots of things have happened since I wrote last. I am writing this from a little encampment of three tents on the outskirts of a little French village, near enough the front to hear the boom of the guns now and then. Last Saturday (May 5th) the head of the Ambulance Service, Dr.

Andrew, got the Cornell men together and told us the French needed men to drive 5-ton Pierce-Arrow trucks (they call them *camions*), and wanted us to be the first section.

The work consists of taking supplies to the front where they are most needed, the section not being assigned to any permanent sector, but being used as a flying squadron to go where the need is greatest. They gave us overnight to think it over, and the next morning forty-four of us volunteered for the Service. It was a lightning decision, but I think I chose right. In the first place, our ambulances would not have been ready for a long time, and we would have had to waste most of the time waiting. In the second place, this Service is no more dangerous than the ambulance, and it is what the French want us to do at present—they say they are up against it for truck drivers, and that is why their gains have not been greater.

Personally, I would rather drive a Ford than a truck, but I think it's up to us to go where we can help most, and it would be very hard to refuse our services when the French say they need us. So here I am.

We have very good food, and plenty of it. The fact is, I have never had such luxuries in camping before. There is a little brook near the camp, and we have fixed a trough for a shower, so we can take a bath every little while. My French is improving all the time. It is hard to find time to study it, but of course we have to speak it quite often, although not as much as I would have expected. I can carry on a simple conversation unless the Frenchman gets excited, and then I lose track of what he is saying and can't understand a thing.

Our training is just about over now. We start in on our regular transport work early next week. I don't know where we are going, and couldn't tell if I did. I can't even tell where our present camp is. Our address now is simply "T.M. 23, Par B.C.M., Paris" but that changes soon. You see we are a new organization, and I do not know how they will number us.

Every cloudy night we hear the big guns very clearly, and sometimes see the "star shells." Aeroplanes buzz around all the time.

## IV

*May 18, 1917.*

You have probably heard from a letter I wrote the family that I am not in the Ambulance Service any more. A new organization has been formed—The American Transport Service—the official name is not certain yet. We drive 5-ton Pierce-Arrow trucks—the best in the world, the French say—with “supplies” for the French Armies. We are shifted from one army to another as we are needed, which means that we are always at the point of the greatest activity. We go as near, often nearer, the front line trenches than the ambulances, have harder work, and do at least as much good. At any rate, it was what the French wanted us to do, and I think it was up to us to do it, unless there were individual reasons against it. Almost all the Cornell boys are with us, all but about eight of the thirty-eight.

At present we are having a wonderful life in camp here. An ideal location, good tents, straw to sleep on, good food and lots of it, and a little

brook near by to wash in. The only drawback is that we cannot make any fires, the wood is so scarce, and there may be other reasons. We have been having some rainy weather, and things get pretty damp. However, every one seems to be keeping well, and I never felt better in my life.

The people are always very much interested when they hear we are Americans. They ask us all sorts of questions—if we are Roosevelt's army was one. I can carry on a very simple, slow conversation, but when they talk fast I am lost. I've learned a lot talking with the truck drivers that went with us to show us how the trucks went. One man had been a diamond cutter for Tiffany before the war, and most of the others were intelligent.

On some of our practice driving trips we got to the old lines where the French and Germans faced each other for two years. In one place there had been a village, but no one would have known it. The ground was all dug up with shell holes, and trenches, and covered with wire entanglements. We went through the German positions, and saw their underground houses, electric bells, and stoves and beds, just like a hotel.

On another trip we went to Pierrefonds, and had an hour to spend going through the castle. It was completely restored a few years ago, and is a great sight—all thick walls, and towers and a little stone staircase. Most of the rooms had soldiers quartered in them, and straw on the floor to sleep on. There are soldiers everywhere. Every little village is crowded with troops just coming from the trenches for a rest, or going to the front.

Every night we can hear the big guns very plainly, especially when it is cloudy, and sometimes we see strings of "star shells."

It is almost time for driving. I must stop.

## V

*May 18, 1917.*

SINCE my last letter I have been busy learning about 5-ton Pierce trucks, and I now know quite a lot about one. Every day we have driving lessons lasting several hours, and sometimes we go to very interesting places. The other day we

went to a place where the Germans and French had faced each other for two years. They showed us where a village had been, but it looked exactly like the country round—shell holes every couple of yards, trenches everywhere, and also wire entanglements. We had to be very careful where we stepped, because there were lots of unexploded shells and hand grenades lying around, which go off very easily. The Germans had been living in dug-outs in a hillside; regular rooms with tin ceilings, stoves, electric bells, and everything.

Day before yesterday we started at 2 p.m. and went to Pierrefonds, and they gave us an hour to go through the castle. It certainly is a wonderful place. We ate our food outside the town, and waited till dark to get practice in night driving without lights. It was a black, cloudy night, and we found it pretty hard to keep the road and our place in the convoy (we had twelve cars). It had been raining, and some of the cars got stuck in the mud at the side of the road, and we had a hard time pulling them out. Then another car ran into us from behind and smashed its radiator. It was not the driver's fault, though, be-



cause you could not see a car three feet off. We had to tow them in, and finally arrived at camp at 4 a. m., a little tired. They don't work us like that all the time, though everybody has kept well so far. I never felt better in my life, and I think I am putting on a good deal of weight.

Monday we had a big banquet. Ambassador Sharp and lots of high French officials were there and made us speeches.

I spent Tuesday in packing up, and yesterday we entrained with great ceremony and came towards here as far as the trains ran, and then in trucks. We are somewhere near Soissons. The French treat us like princes. They give us the glad hand every chance they get, and tell us how glad they are we're here. The food is splendid. Last night at the soldiers' mess we each had more soup out of a big iron pot than an ordinary family of eight will eat, half a loaf of bread that must have weighed three or four pounds, some meat, tea, jam, and vin rouge. The food is even better than at rue Raynouard. We start work on the *camions* this afternoon.

## VI

*June 11, 1917.*

I RECEIVED your letters a few days ago, and was mighty glad to hear all the news from America. I'm glad things are moving fast.

We have been having some exciting times lately. Last week we were on the go most of the time with capacity loads of 75's shells or air bombs or hand grenades, the most dangerous of all to handle, as one little pin sets them off.

We have been on roads when they were being shelled several times. When a shell explodes at a distance it looks at first exactly like a tall, black maple tree, then it becomes just a mess of smoke and dust. Most of the roads are in pretty good condition, as they are lined with piles of gravel, and there are men who fill up the shell holes immediately. The other day we were going along when a shell destroyed a bridge a little ahead of us, and we had to back up quite a way to take another road. I had been the first car, so of course I was the last when we backed. Our *camions* back slowly any time, and then they

hardly seemed to move, and the worst of it was to see a Frenchman stick his head out of a trench every now and then to see what was going on, and then duck down again. Believe me, I wanted to join them.

We had a great treat yesterday. The Captain let us take a *camion* and go to a creek a few miles off for a swim. It was an ideal place, and we swam and lay around in the sun all afternoon. It has been hot ever since we got here, and the dust on the roads often makes it as dark as night, except that it is white. Of course we wear goggles, so it does not get in our eyes, but there is a crust over every part of us when we get back. The work is not so very hard, especially as there are two men on a *camion* to take turns driving.

I am Tent Police today, and must go to work.

## VII

*June 12, 1917.*

I HAVE just returned from a short morning run. They are giving us a good rest after last week, when we had a long series of twelve to

eighteen hour trips with only a few hours between. We had some experiences that were a little too exciting to be pleasant.

One day we were loaded with five tons of trench bombs and were getting along towards the front when the Germans started shelling the road we were on. I guess they saw us from one of their "Sausages" (observation balloons). I was driving the first car. Several shells fell about three hundred yards from us, and then they dropped one by the road about seventy yards ahead, about ten feet from a man working on the road. As we went by he was lying half on his face, with his head and shoulders half blown off, sort of quivering, although of course he was dead. We had just passed him, through a little stream of blood, when the section leader came along in his car with orders to back up, as a bridge ahead of us was destroyed.

As we started backing, another shell landed about twenty yards behind us, between us and the next *camion* (a hundred yards). A shell looks very pretty a little way off, it looks like a big tree, but when it gets closer than a hundred yards it looks wicked, and sounds so, too, and five

tons of explosives between it and you does not make it any pleasanter. Well, we backed up what seemed a long way and it took a long time, and had to wait for all the others to get on the other road. It was funny to look down along the road and see all the Frenchmen squatting in their trenches, sticking their heads out every now and then to see what was going on, but it about doubled the effect of the shells on us.

There was a big ditch just at the beginning of the small road, and as we were pulling through it the engine stopped, although we were in low. It seems that the jarring had shaken a spark plug wire off. Joe Gray, the other man on my *camion*, jumped out and cranked the engine as it had never been cranked before. He almost twirled the handle off. I guess cars that haven't been used for years would have started from the spinning he gave it. He said afterwards that he could have cranked the car all the way home if he had had to. Anyway, the engine went and we pulled out all right, and went along hitting on only three cylinders till we found a sheltered place to stop in and fix it up. We had to come back empty over the same road and it was nervous work

going there, but we were not shelled again that time.

We kick sometimes against having to wear our steel helmets, but they feel just about right at times like that, although I don't believe they would do much good, if any, as a shell fragment goes through boiler plate like water through a sieve, and our helmets are pretty thin. We only had a very few shells whistle that day, as the explosion came so soon after they had passed. The nearest one was probably only a few feet over our heads, and as it passed we felt the concussion of the air, or something else, perhaps, that felt like a light electric shock.

Several times a day we can see a lot of little puffs of smoke in the sky where airplanes are being fired on by one side or another. Sometimes we see air battles, where the airplanes go past each other several times, and try to get over or under the enemy, and sail all around each other. Some of the fellows saw an airplane come down a few days ago, but I haven't seen that yet.

## VIII

*June 24, 1917.*

THIS letter must be short, as I "roll" in a few minutes, but I will write again as soon as I get a little time. I have lots of your letters—I'll tell you how many next time I write, as I haven't time to count them now. I hope all the foolishness that has appeared in the papers about this Service has not started you worrying. I don't know what makes them print such things, or where they get all their ideas from, about "As the 30 Cornellians appeared in the trenches, waving the Stars and Stripes, the veteran soldiers gave a cheer." We don't go within a mile of the first line trenches, and the only danger is from stray shells, and the Germans are not wasting many these days. There has been only one man killed in all the sectors here since we came, and he was the last one of forty men going into a dug-out. There isn't as much danger as there is in New York City.

I think it's fine that you are growing so many things to eat. It certainly will help. Personally,



I haven't seen any board shortage. We have all the food, splendidly cooked, we can eat, and in this camp good water to drink, which is much better than the miserable "pinard" they give us. It is a kind of red wine—I think a kind of claret—worse than anything you can buy in the U. S. At least that is what I gather from our connoisseurs.

This camp is very nice. Besides plenty of good water, we have long wooden barracks to sleep in, which we have made water-tight with rolls of tar paper. It's near a little town where we go sometimes, and where we can buy fresh bread, which is a great treat after the army bread, which is baked somewhere in the south of France, and would make good, solid, car-wheels by the time we get it. We never see any butter, but there is lots of "confiture" to eat on it.

By the way, did you get some photos of the "Chicago" I sent you some time ago? I would like to know, because there is a rumor that photos cannot be sent through the mails, and so I have not sent any more. If you got them safely, I have lots I can send. I print and develop my own pictures. Bought an outfit in Paris 50-50 with an-



other fellow, and we have been doing a rushing business whenever we have a little time off. There has been no excitement for a long time—haven't even heard an *arrivée* shell for a long time, but we hear plenty of "departs," as there are now several batteries not far from camp.

I did not have time to finish this letter last evening before "rolling," so I am finishing it this morning (June 25). The trip was not as long as we expected it would be, as the place we were going to was destroyed before we got there, so we were saved about two miles, which means something to us. We do all our driving without lights, but somehow it never seems to get dark. There has seldom been a night when the road was not perfectly plain before us, and usually the traffic is easily seen. At any rate the other traffic on the road does not endanger us, as a steam roller or a big gun are about the only things on the road heavier than we are. It's mighty interesting work, too, creeping along the roads with batteries of big guns and little *soixante-quinzes* flashing every few minutes near us, and seeing the shrapnel burst with a dull red flash over the trenches, and, near the front, seeing the sky and ground lit

up for miles and miles around by the long strings of star shells and rockets sent up by both the French and the Germans. Sometimes there are dozens of searchlights sweeping over the sky when an airplane motor is heard, and when they find it, if they do, you can hear the hammering of machine guns shooting at it—it sounds exactly like the compressed air riveting on a steel building.

I have got to go and change a tire on my car which was torn last night. Will write again soon.

By the way, will you send me a mouth-organ! Just an ordinary one. I have tried to buy one here, but they don't have them. Also, if it isn't too much trouble, I would like a Sunday paper sent me now and then.

## IX.

*July 2, 1917.*

AT last the weather and transport service are giving me time to write again. About a week ago I got a most dee-licious box of nut fudge

you sent me. Thank you ever so much for it—the first real candy we have had since April 14. Well, when I got up this morning some of the boys came and told me there were a couple of packages for me, and went with me to help open them, and we found it was, or they were, two big boxes of fudge, and a box of guava jelly, for which I and the boys thank you again very gratefully. It's the only good American candy that's been in camp, and it certainly is a treat.

Life has not been at all exciting lately. We seldom get sent to dangerous places in the daytime—not because they don't want us to get shot, but the *camions* have some value, and usually we would have to unload them near some General's domicile, and that might get hit instead of us. So, as a general rule, we load up in the afternoon and then go and wait behind some hill or in some wood where the Boche sausages can't see us, until dark, and then go to the depot and unload. It rained steadily for the last few nights, and so has been very dark. I don't know why we haven't been stuck in the mud,—most of the cars have,—but we have had the luck to escape that, although

I guess we've been shelled more than any other of our cars.

I have come to the conclusion that in this work I am not running any more danger than I am in going to college—perhaps not as much. All the shells the Germans shoot at the roads to destroy them are, of course, high explosive shells, and I have lost all respect for them. They make a big noise, and a big hole in the ground, and a high column of dirt, but they won't kill you unless you are right next to one. Of course, the shrapnel shells are pretty mean—they explode in the air and scatter, but they are no good for destroying roads and bridges, and so we see very few of them. We were in a village yesterday that the Germans had occupied for two and a half years, and only left about April 15th. When they left they blew up all the houses and cut down all the fruit trees they had time to, and cut a ring of bark off around the trunks of the others. Sometimes they bored a hole in a tree to put some powder in, and blew it up. The country is a wreck now, and it will be a desert next year, as far as trees go.

A few days ago we saw an exciting air battle between one of our fellows in the Lafayette

Esquadriile and seven Boches. We were playing a game of baseball after supper when we saw six "spads" (French) fly over us. One was having engine trouble, and had to drop behind the others. A little later we saw a whole swarm of planes in the distance, and heard their machine-guns, and saw one machine come down. The day after one of the fellows went over to a big hospital near us, and talked with the fellow, named Hall, who had been brought down. He said he had dropped way behind his party, and had then mistaken the seven German planes for theirs. Of course, when he got near them they attacked him, and he was shot through the arm and the lung. He lost consciousness and fell, but came to about a hundred feet above the ground, in time to turn his machine. Then he fainted again, and when he came to he was in the hospital. Sounds like a fairy story, doesn't it? Next day all the papers said he had attacked the seven Germans.

I can't tell if I have received all your letters, but I have received several very interesting ones. It's too bad Bill couldn't get into the army. He must be awfully disappointed. I wonder if I could

pass the examination—my eyes are not very good. Lots of the older men in this Service are here because they are not able to join the army, and want to do something.

## X

*July 14, 1917.*

THE maple sugar you sent me came safely last night, and it was the greatest treat I have had for weeks and weeks. It was fresh and in fine condition. I gave some to some of my *poilu* friends, and they didn't seem to know exactly what to make of it. The only thing they would say was that it was very sweet. I don't have to pay duty on anything I get—even tobacco seems to come through free.

July 10th I got your letter written June 21st. We were making a night trip, and were waiting to be unloaded when the staff car brought out the mail to us. I couldn't see very well by the star shells, so I took a lamp off the car and went down into a nearby dug-out. It was the first time the lamp had ever been lit, but it burned all right and

I had just time to read my letters before we had orders to go on.

Everything is going on as usual. Nobody in the section has been hurt or has been sick for more than a couple of days at a time. The only trouble is that there does not seem to be nearly enough work for us to do.

Our address has changed again—the latest is at the head of this letter, but any of the former ones will reach us all right. I am afraid that one of the boxes of fudge that —— sent has been lost—I have received three in all. Along with your maple sugar I got a big box of chocolate from —— . At present, I have probably the biggest reputation for packages in camp. As soon as one comes in for me, fellows come from both barracks to tell me about it and help me carry them up to my bunk.

The hot weather seems to be over, and it has been very cold and rainy for the last few days. I like it better than the hot weather, because I have a rubber shirt and a sheepskin coat, and can keep perfectly warm and dry.

I have a lot of cleaning and greasing to do to my car, so I must stop.



## XI

*July 22, 1917.*

I AM writing on a desk I have just made out of a shell-box, which I saved from a load of "empties" we were carrying back from the front. They are very useful to keep things in, because they are very well made, with big iron hinges. Most of the "75" cases have "U. S. 3" on them—meaning United States 3-inch, so I guess we must be sending over lots of the shells we use in our 3-inch guns.

There is not anything new about the work to say. We still get splendid food and not too much work to do. The section has been very quiet lately, and I've almost forgotten what a shell sounds like. The only excitement has been two or three air raids which the Germans have made on this district. A few nights ago we were waked up by an explosion and a heavy shock that felt like an earthquake, then there was another nearer explosion, and another nearer still. We were pretty well scared then, and were expecting the next one on top of us, but there were no more.



Last Sunday some fellows and I went to Church at a beautiful thirteenth century cathedral on top of a little hill. There was an architect with us and he told us that originally the cathedral had been about three times as big as it is now, with a big spire in the middle, but, even in its present condition, it is very impressive. The inside is all white-washed stone, with few decorations, and the outside walls are covered with grass and small shrubs, wherever they can find a crevice to grow in. The congregation was made up of women and children mostly—all dressed up in their Sunday clothes, and some wounded soldiers.

I am sending some photos in this letter, and I hope they get through. One is of the celebration we had the 4th of July. I told about it in another letter. You can see the car sliding down the narrow gauge track. The trick is to stick the pole through a hole in a board nailed below the pail of water. If you don't do it, the pail tips over on you, as in the picture. The picture of the French village is very true to life—just big piles of stones on both sides of the road, with a few walls standing. There are lots of dug-outs that

you can't see underneath these ruins. The picture of the convoy was taken when we stopped once along the road. My car is not in it, but all the cars are almost the same. The one of the shell exploding in the distance was taken a long time ago, also in a "village." You can see the barbed wire *chevaux de frises* near the camera.

Arrangements about our "permissions" have changed again. I cannot visit —, because we are not allowed to leave France. I think I will take a trip to the Swiss border—near Lake Geneva. They say living there is very cheap, and transportation is free, so it is a good chance to see the Alps and to compare Lake Geneva and Lake George for myself. By the time you get this letter I will probably be back working again, as my permission begins August 2nd. I am rather disappointed at not being able to go to London, but this certainly is a wonderful opportunity to see some beautiful places without spending much money.

Another box of fudge came night before last. It had been packed in moth balls in the Post Office, and it was pretty strong till I had aired it

for a couple of days, then it tasted natural and very good.

The supper gong is ringing, so I must stop.

## XII

*21 rue Raynouard, Paris, May 6, 1917.*

THE present prospect is that I will soon leave Paris, and as it may not be so easy to write letters later on, I want to outline the trend of events up to now.

It isn't at all interesting to read, although we enjoyed it immensely. After the incident with the submarine we landed at Bordeaux, where we spent the day. Rode to Paris in a funny train by night. We've been in Paris for a few days now and have spent the time taking care of military and other red tape, taking French lessons and Ford lessons and seeing Paris, which last is no small nor unpleasant job. This certainly is a regular city.

Now comes an explanation which I shall not be able to make as clear as I would wish.

In the last big battle the French experienced

very great difficulty in transporting munitions. There was a deficit of men to drive the trucks, so serious that the army staff has requested that the American Field Ambulance Service convert men from ambulance to heavy transport drivers. They say that they need the latter much more at the present time.

The officials have asked that a unit of sixty men be organized at once. Andrew, head of our Field Ambulance Service in France, has put the subject before the Cornell men now in Paris, asking that they form the nucleus of the first American unit of this sort.

Tinkham, who raised the first Cornell ambulance unit, is going to convert the unit for which he worked so hard into this new transport service. Nearly every Cornell man is going into it. You can see that I'm confronted with questions. In spite of the fact that our standing as Americans and American Ambulance Field Service men remains exactly the same, there is a change in the nature of the Service. France asks us to enter the new Service. It promises harder work and less excitement, farther from the front. It would be a great relief to me if I could personally explain

the proposed change to the men who gave me money to come over here.

But I must use my own judgment. I believe that you and the other Cornell men at home would endorse my action in getting into the transport service. I place great reliance on Tinkham's judgment. . . .

This is the second chapter of this letter, due to the fact that I've been awaiting events. They have occurred and the events of the near future are clear enough to proceed. After the best of my judgment and that of those whom I feel are best fitted to give advice, I have decided to enter the new transport section. We will be the first armed Americans to enter the "Great War" with the exception of some aviators. Tomorrow morning at 9.30 we leave Paris for barracks not a great many miles from Paris. There we will remain for two weeks probably, learning the Pierce-Arrow cars, which will be used exclusively.

I sincerely hope that in case you do not favor my action, that you will refrain from too severe a criticism until I can get home and explain comprehensively the turn which may mean so much to me. Had I followed my personal desires I

would have refused to leave the ambulance service. But after my experience with the submarine and learning practically at first hand the enemy that not only France, but the United States, has to deal with, and seeing the tremendous sacrifice going on about me without a sign of quailing, I feel that any sacrifice of personal desires that I make is infinitely trivial. If France is so hard put as to make, through some of her highest officials, a request that a part of her Ambulance Service be turned over into this new Service,—What is a man to think?

This letter certainly lacks the valuable quality of brevity. With a request that you write me and a promise to keep you posted as far as reasonable, though not an ambulance driver I am,

Yours sincerely

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### XIII

A WHOLE lot has happened, too much to account for in detail, since I last wrote. Forty-two of us, mostly Cornell boys, left Paris on the morning of May 8. Movies and quite a celebra-

tion accompanied the departure. In the middle of the afternoon we had arrived at the nearest point the trains were able to reach to Soissons in the Brie region. We were trucked to a small town in a hilly wooded country. A mile or so out we made a camp, which was changed to a permanent position in a large and beautiful open beech wood.

We have three nice tents, fourteen men to a tent, a French army cooking outfit and two cooks who provide plain, well cooked food in more than sufficient quantity.

There is a splendid man, a French Lieutenant, in charge. He and an assistant give us lectures on the Pierce-Arrow cars, road and army regulations, etc. There are eighteen trucks (one section) back from the front to train us in running them. We are getting along well and seeing a lot of trenches and other interesting scenery.

When our section has been trained we will go on duty as a reserve, to supply the drivers where extra supplies are needed, the shifts making it possible for us to see greatly more of the war and country.

I have just asked the Lieutenant and he says it is all right to say that we are in the Brie district



at present, near Soissons. Soissons is now being shelled to prevent entrance of trains.

The actual war sights we have seen are I suppose only preliminaries. We hear the big guns, see as many as a dozen or fifteen airplanes in the air at once and at night there are the stray shells from anti-aircraft guns and the strings of luminous rockets. There is a hand grenade practice point a couple of hundred yards from the camp and we were shown the mechanism and throwing, all of which were mighty interesting.

Yesterday we went to what was the first line less than two months ago. The Germans were driven out by a big French drive from a position which they had held for two years. The place was a sure enough sight, concreted, glazed, decorated, curiosities and salvage to satisfy the most fanatical. The place was full of traps, wires with bombs hanging in concealed places, etc. We hardly dared touch anything.

A town back of the trenches was nearly grounded, the whole country round indescribable in its ruin of iron, enormous shell holes, barb wire, remains of all kinds of shells and mechanisms of war.



If I respected the French before I came over here, that respect is now multiplied many times. Outside of their treating us in the very best way possible, the way they seem to be running the war is certainly wonderful. If anything goes wrong, or any personal pleasures have to be turned into hardships, it's "*Pour La Guerre*," and is all right. They all seem to be well aware that this is a war of years, not months.

The morning after we had set up camp here, a band was brought from the front, a Captain and a bunch of men gave us a welcome, a speech, and some right good music. All of which indicates the value and rating that France puts on the new blood that she needs more than any one in America can realize.

We have been out nearly all day today, learning how to turn the trucks around under difficulties. I should think that it would cost the French Government about \$100 apiece to train us.

It is now 5 o'clock and the big guns at the front are going at it with unusual vigor.

## XIV.

JUST before our arrival in Paris, the American Ambulance Field Service was changed into the American Field Service and the organization much enlarged. Under the existing conditions, many of us had to enter other fields of service. We came to help France and France needed men for transport service. It was our duty to join where needed and this we did. Six of the W. U. Unit are with me; the rest are in Paris and expect to drive ambulances there—to and from the railway stations. I hated very much to break up the unit, but I could not have done otherwise and I have a clear conscience. America is at war and boys of my standing should not be doing only the Ambulance work. Please do not criticise my action—it would be unfair to me, for no one in America has the knowledge that he must have before making any conclusions.—It isn't what we came to do, but it is the thing to do.—America is absurdly ignorant of the part she is expected to play in this great war. It is a tremendous and grim thing, and the sooner America

realizes it, the better. France has fought a wonderful fight and it is now time for a fresh entry into the conflict.

## XV.

*June 14, 1917.*

THE section has just finished loading the cars at one of the big depots and is on the road toward the lines. It is early in the afternoon and they can only go to a certain point along the road and wait there until nightfall before continuing to the more advanced posts. The load consists of various trench materials, walks, poles, wire, screens, and so on. It is not our task to carry such things, but during slack intervals the reserves do not always carry ammunition. We arrived three weeks ago, just at the tail end of an offensive, and work has been diminishing ever since. The fellows get impatient at being idle any of the time—they haven't learned that this is how war goes. Over three weeks since we left the training school and began regular service. Before six months are up the fellows will have accomplished a lot of real

hard physical work. Much more, I think, than in the Ambulance section. But the work isn't nearly so appealing, so it would take more courage to see it through. We go about as far up as the ambulances and take the same risks—in fact, on every trip some of the cars have run through shells, but there isn't the same opportunity for individual action. *Convois* of eight, twelve, sixteen cars always together.

I knew from the start that we had an exceptionally good set of men, and they are turning out that in every respect. The French Captain has remarked about it several times. — and — are excellent Sergeants, and — and — are equally good Corporals. — and — are next in line for non-com. officers. Already four of the men of the original section have been made leaders of new sections—they were not Cornell men, however. It is my aim to have this section the well from which the leaders for the new sections will be drawn. This T. M. Service should increase very fast. I expect by the end of the summer there will be a thousand men enrolled. Of course, the type of fellows may have to change because of conscription, but it will be just the place for men

over thirty who wish to serve in some active manner.

I wish the people in America could realize how much France needs men and supplies. Not only fighting men, but organizers and business heads. At times there are incidents that give reasons, perhaps, why the war has lasted so long.

I was delighted to receive your letter telling of the financial success of your campaign for money for the Service.

## XVI

*July 2nd, 1917.*

ALTHOUGH yesterday was Sunday no one would have known it as far as we were concerned. In the morning a mist which was the end of a two days' rain kept every one who had not work to do indoors where we lay around and rested, as the orders were out that we were to go out that night. Besides I had several things to do, such as laying walks, etc., so that the fellows could get around camp without being swallowed up in the mud. For two days' rain makes this soil im-

passable for human or any other travel. The roads, however, are good, for they have a nice deep rock bottom, and as long as one stays there everything runs along O. K. But when a 5-ton truck gets stuck in the mud there's the deuce to pay and it takes a pretty good deal of work to get her out again. So far we have been lucky and with careful driving have avoided lots of trouble.

Now let me tell you why I feel like a prince today. To begin with four of the fellows left for Meaux, where they are training as officers and that left some vacancies. Before this time I had been a second driver to — on the second car (we call the job "Grease Cup Boy"). Well, what do you think, I became the proud possessor of a 5-ton truck myself, with a grease cup boy under me and lots of driving. This job was not to last long. I only took one trip with my car and was hardly on to its quaint tricks when our acting Chief called me to the Bureau and said that one of the Corporals had been called to — and that I was to be a Corporal from henceforth. Now maybe this doesn't mean much, but to me it means a lot. Our Service is young and new sections are going out every day. Already nine of

our men have gone to Meaux; when they complete their training they take out their own sections. I'm now in direct line to be sent to Meaux; maybe it will be in six weeks, maybe not for ten, but anyway eventually I think I shall have a chance to go and then I shall be a First Lieutenant. So although I don't want to raise your hopes too high I want you to know how lucky I am and that so far I've done my duty and that bit more which counted.

Our trip last night was uneventful, and as I have been over the same road at least six times it was more or less monotonous. However, the place where we stopped for supper was under free bombardment. The shells were coming in about once every minute. The whizzytheth XX! and then a bang! It was rather disconcerting even when one knew they were landing three hundred feet away. The French batteries were mighty busy, too, and it was like being in a mighty thunderstorm which never stopped thundering an instant. One gets so that he can distinguish the size of the gun by the strength of the explosion and it was amusing to guess which was which.

I don't think I ever told you just how we were organized. That is, what every *officier* is supposed to do. Well, there are five degrees of rank. The Assistant Driver, Driver, Corporal, Sergeant, and Chief. The Assistant Driver helps out on everything and the Driver is only a degree higher in that he is responsible for the car. Both have to clean the car, repair it, etc., and also act in turn with the other men as camp police. The Corporal has to see that the work is done and done right and in convoy rides in the last car of each section to see that the convoy is kept from trailing out along the road, and in case a car has to stop sizes up the trouble, fixes it if he can, and if not sees that it gets home. The Sergeant is responsible for the convoy en route, the camp and men in general, while the Chief does the whole thing, and rides in the Staff car. If he is a good man and has a good bunch, his responsibilities are light, if not they are heavy.

I must do the rounds, so good-bye until later.



## XVII

*Somewhere in France, July, 1917.*

It is three o'clock this afternoon and I have only just got up, the reason being that I did not get in until eight this morning. We had a long, hard trip yesterday and last night. Left here at two in the afternoon, picked up a load of barbed wire, then ran up toward the lines as far as we could in daylight and stopped for supper about 5 o'clock. Three of us had bought some cheese, bread, and jam, so with the modest rations furnished us we had an excellent supper, sitting out in the middle of a field with a fine view off to the west and no reminders from the north that such a thing as war was going on.

We had not been there very long before we heard a hiss and a bang nearby and ran over to see what had happened. We found that one of the crew boys had picked up a hand grenade and thrown it into a nearby trench, but it failed to explode, so he looked over to discover the reason, with the result it went off and some jagged splinters hit him in the leg above the knee. We bandaged him up, hailed a passing ambulance and

shipped him off to the hospital, from which reports have come that the slug was easily removed and he will soon be out. He was a lucky lad.

The fields about here are filled with unexploded shell and hand grenades and bombs and we have strict orders not to touch them, so it was his own fault, pure and simple. Well, we had to wait until 10 o'clock so we would not be seen before going to the lines. We ran down into the gully of the Aisne river and just as we were about to cross the stream the car ahead of me, instead of turning and going over the new bridge, headed straight for the one which had been destroyed and almost got there, but was stopped in time. I turned to the right without waiting for him, crossed the new makeshift bridge and went banging along up the opposite slope where we were to unload.

There was no shelling to speak of, so soon all ten trucks were unloaded and we were ready to go home, but it was not to be. There was a lot of heavy shells which were to be moved to another spot from a nearby abandoned battery, so we cranked up and started off for another load.

It was awfully dark and cloudy and just beginning to rain, so there was some excuse for my almost running down some soldiers on their way back from the trenches. They were marching along silently in the dark, the Captain with his dog leading the way on foot; the soldiers with their rifles and packs close behind him; they followed by the supply wagons.

There is something most impressive about the way these infantry officers lead their men. For the most part they are men well on towards middle age; that is, the higher officers; instead of riding they usually walk along just ahead of the younger officers and invariably they are accompanied by a German police dog. You get the impression that they expect nothing better than the men get, stand the same marches and the same hardships and at the same time carry all the responsibility that the command of a body of men brings.

So having passed by, we ran on for a few kilometers in the pouring rain; the unloaded trucks slid first to one side of the road, then to the other, with sometimes a wheel in the ditch. After some time we found the shells which turned out to be

those huge 320's. It took the men a long time to load them, so we coiled up on the seats, pulled our thick coats over us, and slept soundly in the rain for almost two hours.

Then came the order to move, the cars roared and spluttered; one went into a ditch and had to be pulled out. Another lost all the water from its radiator because the car ahead smashed into it but went along, the last car towing the invalid. The road we ran along would in daylight have been about as safe as a lane in no man's land, but now with only the star shells burning over us and no sausages or balloons up it was as safe as Harrison Avenue on a summer night. The star shells lighted things up wonderfully.

We went rumbling through deserted villages, the noise of the trucks becoming a roar in the little narrow streets. Never a soul do you see in these little ruined towns; it is almost uncanny. Most of the little houses are roofless, some have great gaping holes in the walls, many have little left but the walls themselves, which stand out in all their jaggedness against the blaze of light to the north. A sentry stood at the bridge as we crossed a poplar lined canal. We ran along

through the country again, but soon entered one of the prettiest French towns I have yet seen.

The streets were wide (for a French town), most of the buildings were chateaux set well back from the road among the trees, and oddly enough they were little damaged from shell fire. Off to the right a square church tower, surmounted by the usual ugly spire which spoils so many French country churches, was clearly visible.

We turned to the left and suddenly came into a part of the town which had been torn to pieces. The trees were cut off near the ground, though some still stood with a grotesque limb or two stuck out from the trunk. The houses were in ruins; great round shadows in the gardens showed where some of the shells had landed. It was almost impossible to believe that this was a part of the same town.

We passed on again into the country and turned back toward the south. The star shells behind us cast the shadows of the *camion* on the road before us. No longer was the illumination an aid; it was most decidedly a hindrance. The road became rougher; we bumped rapidly on and then suddenly came out into one of those great

broad highways for which France is famous. Those of us who were wise enough to remove the governors from our cars flew along; those who had not bumped placidly on. Finally, just as it was growing light, we came to our depot, only to find we could not be unloaded until six o'clock.

The driver of the car ahead of me let down the back of his truck, exposing the forty-odd shells which lay there. He thought he would be unloaded there, but instead he was told to move further on. Forgetting that his tailboard was down, he started ahead, jolting over the corduroy road. I saw the last one of the shells move back, then it rolled a bit nearer the edge. I did not budge, but sat there scared stiff. Nearer it came and suddenly rolled off and dropped five feet onto the log roadway and lay there. I had not dared to breathe, for it seemed an hour, and all I could do was to gulp. So we curled up again on our coats.

The rain began again, but we slept on for two hours, until the men came to unload us. Then we flew for home, picking up some turbaned African soldiers who asked for a lift. At 7:30 a.m. we pulled in here and at 8 we were sound

asleep after eighteen hours on the road. I have gone into detail about this trip, so as to show what our work is like. Sometimes we have more excitement in various forms, but it was an average trip.

### XVIII

WE are resting by the road—a very common thing in the Transport Military Service. I have a load of green wood—for trestle work—which cannot weigh more than 34,000 pounds, for it is only a 5-ton truck.

As my paper may testify before my interrupted letter is complete, I have not washed my hands or face for more than sixty hours. My last bath was taken in Paris.

I spoke above of interruptions. They are not orders to proceed, or unload, or any such thing. The first was to watch a snappy combat of *soixante quinze*s and a squadron of Boche airplanes. They seemed to be directly over N——, which is some twelve kilometers from F—— where we are temporarily quartered. The pet guns of the French,

the little pieces which with the aid of the inferior Fifth Avenue buses are reputed to have saved Paris pounded away for about ten minutes. They sprinkled little white puffs all over the sky but didn't seem to be coming within some nine or ten miles of the white-bellied evening birds. The latter, however, apparently were wasting no time or gasoline in getting up and away. They were soon out of sight. The *poilus* who insist upon treating us as we do a circus parade claimed that several of the *booms* were aerial bombs. However they tell us anything they think we can understand of their French so it is hard to believe anything.

The second interruption (which as it happened occurred some fifteen minutes before the other—and a few less before I began this letter) was a large troop movement. It is nothing new, or unique. But of course it may interest you somewhat. They were mostly French Hindu Chinese, whom the French call "Annamites," but were sprinkled with Senegalese and natives. Pinched in between them were a few hundred German prisoners. They looked very much like little boys who had been



caught on five or six dictionaries and a morocco bound copy of *Heroes and Hero Worship* eating jam. They weren't having any fun, though, where these were, and you can hardly hate any one who has lived like a rat in the ground for months.

I have seen a bit of that ferret-life. We have been through miles of first line trenches which had been evacuated by the Germans several weeks before. We also thoroughly investigated the village of N——, which the French tore completely to pieces to retake it from the Germans. We got what we had been asking for in Paris, almost the day we left it—excitement! Some of us wanted it and some of us thought we wanted it. Now, of course, we sleep with 210 and bigger shells hurtling their demoniac way over our heads. But the first day that we crouched in a rehearsal trench watching the French rookies in hand grenade practice, there wasn't one of us that didn't shake all over every once in a while—perhaps every time a grenade was thrown.

We are part of the French Army. Just what our status will be when our troops, promised for July, arrive we have not yet been able to dis-

cover. Finding out anything is the hardest work we have. Often we don't know where we are or where we are going. We never know when we are through or when we are starting. In fact we know very little except that we work hard and probably shall until we get back to Paris.

Since starting the above paragraph we have come some eighteen miles, steady running over deeply rutted roads, muddy roads, and over-trafficked roads. A tired, sleepy-looking gang of unfit-for-the-front peasants are nonchalantly unloading the poles. I am carrying forty-six and the seven men disturbing my *camion* should have them out in time for dinner-supper, which is in two hours.

This above statement is misleading. Supper is any time we get back; just as breakfast is fifteen minutes before we leave—be that at 4 or 8. Lunch is any time motors are hot enough to stop the *convois*.

If I am giving the impression that a single one of us is displeased or dissatisfied it is an erroneous one. Lately, since we have left our training camp, we have been mostly marking time. I repeat that things are quiet along most of the

French front and especially where we happen to be. Near here we have been extraordinarily successful and the air supremacy is assured, I imagine. However, French newspapers must bow in accuracy and unbiasedness even to The —; and French soldiers, even officers, are pretty badly informed as to what is happening except in their own sections.

England is of course just catching her stride. I doubt if she has her second wind. Each day, however, she extends her lines, relieving the French strain and allowing a more perfect concentration of offensive forces. The Australians are constantly the recipients of unending praise and the Canadians and New Zealanders are honored. The Scotch (who wear silk plaid breeches in every Paris café) are absolutely worshipped.

To return to my statement of our treatment and satisfaction. They love us, particularly because we are volunteers and especially because we are Americans. They cannot do enough for us in every way.

The work is spasmodic—that is all that we object to. We may work seventy hours and then loaf and make ourselves think we are not (which

is the harder) for three times seventy. Even at that it is pleasant to think that no alarm-clock will waken you at 7 (a rough hand will do it at 5) to attend a lecture on Roman Lawyers and their friends by a much-esteemed Professor.

I am at this moment the camp favorite. A New York *Times* for Sunday, April 15, has just arrived. It is the first American newspaper that has disturbed our quiet and most blissful coma of ignorance.

## XIX

### *Somewhere in July.*

WE left the training camp about a week ago and arrived at our permanent place of abode after about six hours of riding in the *camions*. The camp is at J——, about seven miles from the front, and in the Aisne district. We were put into barracks, but before we had time to get settled and everything put to rights we were called to go out on a drive which lasted all night. The work has kept up ever since and last night was the first that we have had over five hours' sleep in.

The *camion* that Elmer and I received (there are two of us on each truck) was a 5-ton Pierce-Arrow, which was in fairly good shape. It has been through the battles of the Somme and the Marne and has three shell and five or six bullet holes in it. El and I have worked on it all our spare time and now it is running in fine order. Over here you have to do all the repairs on the cars yourself and that is no slight job with some of these old trucks.

The other day we left at five in the morning and loaded at park and drove about twenty miles to B—— at C—— where we left our load in the dumping park. While we were waiting there for the Frenchmen to unload,—and believe me they are mighty slow workers,—we had a very interesting sight.

A French airplane was over the trenches dropping a few bombs, when all of a sudden a German plane came out. The French plane retreated back over his own trenches with the other following him. It was a beautiful sight to see the shrapnel from the French anti-aircraft guns bursting white puffs around the German flyer. The Frenchman finally got above the Boche and

came down in a spiral around him, firing his machine-gun. As he did so the Boche must have been hit because he zigzagged down to earth, leaving a trail of smoke behind him. The minute he started falling, all the French *poilus* started yelling, for the German planes do an awful lot of damage dropping bombs at night and the French are glad to get back at them.

We went back again and loaded up at another park and went across the Aisne river to a little town behind a hill where we had to wait until dark before we could go ahead. About nine o'clock we took our load of shells, seventy-fives, to Château S——, which is about one mile from the trenches. There are two batteries of seventy-fives and one of one hundred fifty-fives there and when they were all going at once it certainly was some Fourth of July by the noise. When the *départées* left the guns you would see a flash and then hear a report followed by a whirring moan. That is all right, but when you hear an *arrivée*, a shriek followed by a report, if it is anywhere near you, you want to get right down on your face on the ground. You are quite safe if you

do that because the fragments of shells scatter in parabolas from where they land.

On the way home just after we crossed the bridge over the Aisne at P——d'A——, one of the cars ran out of gas so the whole *rame* stopped and as luck would have it the Germans started shelling the bridge with high explosive shells. They didn't quite have the range and the first shell landed seventy-five yards from us and the second about fifty feet away. The last covered us with dirt and the fuse landed on the road right side of one of the fellows and he now has it as a souvenir. We all must have had horseshoes tied to us, however, and nobody has been hit in our section as yet.

Well, we have got to roll pretty soon now, so I must close. Give my love to all the folks and write soon because anything no matter how short seems mighty good to us out here.

## XX

*August 1st, 1917.*

I'M telling the world I'm tired. It is now twelve days and twelve nights that we have been working with only a little time between trips to eat and write letters. About all our sleep we get on our cars while they are being loaded. But now we are all getting hardened to the work so it's not so bad. As for dirt, well if cleanliness is next to godliness then I guess we all live next door to the devil, for water is scarce. There isn't much to write today, for nothing much has happened.

The last three days I have been running the wrecking car and since it has been raining for a couple of days it has been some job. When it rains here the roads all disappear and two or three inches of slimy mud take their place. Consequently lots of cars slide off into the ditches and we have to haul them out. One car started across country for Berlin but landed up against one of the screens which protect the Route Gardue so didn't get far. He was loaded with ammunition which we had to unload, then pull him back on the road, load him up again and ship



him off. Then another car slipped off into a field and we had to repeat the process. Finally after forty-eight hours of work like that we started for camp but picked up a car with a broken drive shaft and had to tow it fifteen miles back to the repair shop. But when we got there about 10 o'clock this morning such a meal as they had for us! Good beef, string beans, lentils, potatoes, bread and cheese, and hot coffee! Gosh! It tasted like a million dollars.

Our camp is situated a short way behind the lines so that we do not have to go far to the munition depots, but since we are supplying two sectors now we have to haul a long way. I have forgotten whether I told about our camp so I will tell you now. We have a large tent which serves as a dining-room and as a recreation room. Around this are grouped trailers, called *remorquis*, in which we sleep. These are about six feet by ten and three men live in each with hanging beds suspended from the roof. So far we have found them very comfortable but I bet they'll be cold in winter. At any rate we don't sleep much in them, so we should worry. We have our own cooking staff and are very well

taken care of in that respect. Outside of the regular French officers' fare we receive forty cents a day extra toward food, so you see we fare well. For breakfast we have eggs, bread and jam, and coffee. For dinner we get meat (usually beef), rice or spaghetti, bread and jam, and coffee. Supper is our big meal,—we have meat, potatoes, beans or lentils, some kind of fruit, vegetables, and hot tea or coffee. The only thing we lack is sweet stuff but we buy chocolate to fill in. Just at present I am out of money so I don't get any, so it's not much loss.

It is rumored around camp that we move for new quarters tomorrow. We go up to the Western front where there is a big French and British offensive going on. When we move all we have to do is to hitch our *remorquis* behind our trucks and go. It's like picking up your bed and walking. By moving so much we will eventually see most of the front, which will be fine. The offensive around here last week resulted in the French gaining what they desired so they will probably have a lull here for a while. But while this attack lasted (for two weeks) it was terrible. There are some pictures in Leslie's Magazine of

July the 5th, which shows some pictures of screened roads. These are taken on this front and are roads which I have travelled over. The bridge pictured was recently blown up by a shell. These pictures might interest you as other pictures also in it show pictures of this front.

Well, we have to carry some bomb-proofs up to a town near the front lines tonight, so I must close. We go up to this town by night because the road up is visible to the Germans and our convoy would be a tasty bit to them. Therefore we go up there at night. I had to tow a car down from there the other day in broad daylight, but nothing happened and we weren't fired on once.

## XXI

*Paris, May 6, 1917.*

THIS is my first letter to you all since my arrival in Paris. My last letter home was written on the boat from which we landed without event on April 25th. I shall never forget the last morning on board. I climbed out of bed early in order to be on deck when the boat

arrived in sight of land. When I got up on deck, through the mist could be seen indistinctly the shore line, which in an hour became a mass of green landscape. After eleven days of nothing but water in motion, it was the greatest relief to the eyes to see land again. Soon we were in the harbor feasting our eyes on the beautiful farms and hamlets which ran down to the water's edge not over one hundred yards away. By noon we were up the harbor as far as the tide would let us go, waiting for higher tide before proceeding to Bordeaux; away again at 4 p.m., arriving at the end of our journey at 10 o'clock Wednesday night. As the hotels were nearly all filled, we remained on the boat all night.

In the morning we barely had time to breakfast and send for a few cards before our train left for Paris. I did not, therefore, have time to see much of Bordeaux. The trains and train service here are far superior to what I had imagined they would be. First-class engines, good, though crude coaches, made up of six to ten passenger compartments. Ten of us climbed into one of these in a second-class coach, and we were off. The Government took us up, so as we

travelled free of charge, we saw nothing of the conductor all the way.

The trip was without exception the most beautiful and interesting that I have ever taken. All of France is wearing its spring coat. The farms run right up to the tracks. Garden truck and grain are up, and the fields are full of laborers—mostly women. The few men seen were either crippled, wounded, or too old for army service. Most of the traction on the farms is done by oxen; more so now I understand than formerly, as the horses all go to the front.

The farmsteads, though humble, are as neat as pins. Gardens come up to the door; no space is wasted. All of the houses are of stone, or a kind of mud plaster, and all the houses on farms and in the little towns have red tile roofs. One feels on passing through the country that he is constantly in a mammoth old-fashioned garden, so neat and quiet and beautiful is everything. Some of the boys played cards all of the way up. I couldn't leave the window, for the beauty of the scene gripped me from the moment we left Bordeaux.

After nine too short hours, we arrived in Paris

at dusk, and were taken at once to headquarters, tired, dirty (they use soft coal on the railroads), but glad to get where we could get something under the belt and then a clean bed. 21 rue Raynouard was full to capacity, as was the overflow on rue Lekain, but they had rented a good sized chapel next to the house on rue Lekain, and arranged twenty-five cots in rows there. About twenty of the Cornell bunch, including myself, picked cots there, and yours truly went at once to bed to sleep the sleep of the just.

It is a mighty comfortable camp. We got breakfast at the house next door in rue Lekain, and the other meals at headquarters on rue Raynouard. The feed is excellent and we could not be treated better. Headquarters is a fine old mansion given for the duration of the war by the owners to the American Field Service. It backs on to a beautiful park, sloping down to the Seine, the existence of which would not be suspected from a look at the grim, homely appearance of the front of the house on rue Raynouard. The interior, though now bare of carpets and expensive furniture, suggests grandeur. Great halls and stairways, a beautiful panelled dining-

room, and imposing terraces in the rear, all fit in with one's impressions (derived from books) of French love of the beautiful. The rooms now are dormitories for the men while in Paris, and offices, a lounge and a dining-room and a great kitchen. We are *well taken care* of here.

I have been rather busy since my arrival and have not really had an opportunity to *see* Paris. I have, however, taken advantage of what spare time I have had to see the exterior of some of the most beautiful buildings and some of the parks. Most of the famous buildings, as the Louvre, etc., are closed to the public, on account of the war, and I, therefore will not be able to see the inside of them, but it is most interesting to wander about just looking at these magnificent buildings with their surrounding parks and wonderful statues; one reads history, struggles, sacrifice, at every step. I imagine France is going through now on a large scale what she has been through for many, many generations. Her monuments are predominantly war monuments, her art that art inspired by great sacrifice and love of country. Already I feel that I have learned much that I needed to learn. If I were to re-



turn now I would feel repaid for the trip. I shall have much to tell you of this wonderful place and these wonderful people after I have been in contact with them longer.

What has impressed me most during my short stay here is the earnestness of the French people in the present conflict; their willingness to sacrifice *everything* for the great cause which they have been upholding for the world since the beginning of the war. There are few men in civilian clothes seen in Paris, and those few are cripples and old men. Women predominate to a great degree, and I think it conservative to say that seventy-five per cent. of the women are in black. And yet there is little sadness displayed. True, there are few smiling faces to be seen, too great a tragedy is being acted for these poor people to find much joy in life, and yet no one complains; each plays the part willingly knowing that the sacrifice has been made for France. This is indeed a wonderful people. But Paris is no longer gay.

It is indeed a great consolation to me now, more so than I ever imagined it would be, to know that the United States is at last a participant



in this awful affair. It is indeed a miserable affair and a pity that the whole world should be required to turn from the ordinary pursuits of life and peace to those of war. But for a long time a war against oppression, crime, and frightfulness has been waged for us, and we have reaped the "benefits" in money.

Thank God we can now lift up our heads and square our shoulders again! The Stars and Stripes again means what it meant in '76 and '12 and '61—it stands for honor and peace and humanity even though the price be war. I long for the day when our first American troops land in France to fight shoulder to shoulder with the rest of the world against selfishness and greed, and when this war is over, as I pray it soon will be, may America, my country, take the initiative in the movement for an alliance of nations, a world federation so organized that war will no longer be possible. Do not think that mine is a schoolboy patriotism. I despise a fight as such; I despise war—as such. We—the United States—are fighting against war—not for it.

## XXII

*June 10, 1917.*

HERE I am again and my intention is to complete this letter at this sitting and get it off to you tonight. I had similar intentions on the fifth, but was called for a meeting while writing and this is the first opportunity I have had since then to write you. I am writing this under far different circumstances and conditions than those surrounding me when I wrote the above. In the first place I am seated on a pile of straw under a tent somewhere in France as a member of T. M. 23, with address changed to B. C. M., Paris, France.

I am still in the American Field Service doing, however, different work than I had originally planned. On May 5th, Mr. Andrew, the head of the American Field Service, called all the Cornell men together and outlined a plan which the French Government asked him to adopt. As the United States is no longer neutral the American Field Service has been asked to extend its activities and supply men for transport work at the front as well as for ambulance work. At

present there is a great lack of drivers for the big transport ammunition trucks—a lack which is not felt in the ambulance work.

The plan as presented to us was for as many men as possible among those present who could pass the physical examination to volunteer for this service instead of for the ambulance; to recruit to forty men and leave at once for a week's training at some point out toward the front. The plan was adopted and after getting our equipment together and being passed on by the doctor, forty of us left Paris yesterday morning after a most impressive ceremony. We were given a banquet Monday night at which Ambassador Sharp and several high up French officers addressed us with stirring speeches. Yesterday morning we were inspected under arms and passed in review with the Stars and Stripes waving in our midst.

Do not be alarmed at this change. The work is not more dangerous than the ambulance work, but is more to my liking. It is belligerent service and as the United States is no longer neutral, and as I am praying that she will send her boys and soon fight in a most worthy cause, I could see no reason why I should now be doing work

which is being carried on largely by neutrals. The same organization is handling this new service as is handling the ambulance. This is merely a new branch—a new activity of the Field Service. Our unit is the first unit in this service and the first organization of Americans to go into belligerent service in France since war was declared by the United States.

We left Paris for ——— yesterday morning after the fine send off, glad for the change, and arrived here in the afternoon. We spent the afternoon and evening pitching camp and getting organized and turned in early in order to be up early in the morning. The camp is in a beautiful little valley just below a pretty, though humble French town. We have three large tents, an officers' tent, and two kitchen wagons, and an office wagon. This morning we had another ceremony conducted by a French Captain and a large band, at which the American and French flags were formally raised over the camp.

We shall be here a week learning how to drive the big 5-ton Pierce-Arrow military trucks, after which time we will be sent out into active service at the front. There will be twenty trucks

travelling in convoy, two men to a machine, each driving half the time and assisting on the road the other half. We begin the work tomorrow and later I will be able to tell you more in detail just what we have to do. There will be much that I cannot tell you until I see you again. Our orders are very strict on this point and places and incidents will have to be left out of my letter. I'll keep a diary, however, and will have much to tell you when I see you again. I am in the best of health and am getting a great deal out of this experience!

## XXIII

*Saturday, June 16, 1917.*

THIS is a hot, sultry afternoon and the barracks are like ovens, but I want to get a letter started to you now that I have a little time, so I will start it now and finish it in the cool of this evening unless other duties prevent. I have received no word from the States since I last wrote you, but as a boat has arrived and mail is be-

ginning to come in again I am looking forward to receiving the good home letters tonight.

Last night I had a most pleasant surprise in the receipt of the pound of tobacco from ——. I was surely hungry for a real smoke, for my supply had run out some time ago and French tobacco is vile. So I got out my old jimmy pipe and filled it full and then went out and dreamed pipe dreams. I guess you know, without my telling you, how much I appreciate your keeping me supplied. You folks will all have me spoiled; what with candy and books and smoke a fellow is as comfortable as a Fifth Avenue millionaire and lots happier.

Evening—same day. Well, I didn't get far this afternoon. Just got started when Tinkham called the section out for drill. We surely had *some* workout and all came in after two hours of it wringing wet, for this has been about the hottest day we have had and that means pretty hot and the heat here seems more depressing than at home.

We have had but very little rain in this section, but in spite of that fact the crops seem to be doing well. Though the heat of the day is

intense, the nights usually turn off cool and refreshing. A heavy dew falls, which probably in a measure makes up for some of the lack of rain. Just now I am down the road from camp writing on the steering wheel of one of the trucks as a desk and hoping that it will not take too long for this part of the world to cool off tonight, for it is difficult to make one's mind operate when it is as warm as it is right now.

The postman disappointed most of us tonight, bringing only three or four letters and that's not near enough to keep a whole camp satisfied. But as tomorrow is Sunday, which is not a day off in the war zone, we will hope for better luck when he comes tomorrow night. The mail service is highly inefficient as far as speed is concerned, but it seldom fails in finally delivering what is intrusted to it. So here's hoping for the morrow. I sure am anxious to hear from you all.

Everything is going well with me here. Our group of four sections needs but one more section to make the group complete, and that one will be added next week. Recruits are rapidly arriving in Paris for this service and new sections are being formed as fast as possible and will be sent



to form new groups as soon as they receive the proper training. Our group will consist when completed of: Section A—mostly Cornell; Section B—mostly Andover; Section C—mostly Dartmouth; and Section D—miscellaneous. The group lives in adjacent barracks, but each section has its own Lieutenant and Commissary and works independent of the others. There is a friendly rivalry among the sections in many ways, i.e., the carrying out of our daily work; drill; baseball; etc.

On the whole the boys get along together finely, though as is always the case when a bunch of men get together there comes up now and then a little friction which soon wears off after the application of the right kind of oil and everything is lovely again. It may be because I am closer to them and know them better, but I feel that of all the sections so far our bunch has the cleanest, finest bunch of lads. I have made some good friends among them. There's Rusty, of course; them —— (Cornell '14) whom I knew well at school; —— is a prince of a lad who I have come to know very well, for we spend much of our spare time together, and as he is Sergeant



of the *rame* in which I am "Corp." we work together. You will be glad to know him when we get back. Then there is —, who is Rusty's pal and who is one of those short, lanky lads who makes every one near him at all times laugh at his funny remarks and antics. There are a lot of fine fellows here! — and — I knew better than any of the rest. So with so many old friends and new a fellow can't kick at his environment.

Sunday noon.—Couldn't finish this last night, as I was called in for orders for the work today, which consists of a night trip. Leaving camp at 4 p.m. we drive to a loading station, get a load of "junk" (munitions or materials), then drive toward the front, arriving at a little shot-up town at about 6:30, where we stop, eat a cold lunch, and wait until dark. Then we move on to our destination, an artillery supply station, where we are unloaded. Then back to camp in the dark without a light and in bed at about 2 a.m., if everything goes well. Things are mighty quiet here along the front and for the past week we have not been on the road as much as usual or as much as we would like to be. Nevertheless

there is plenty to do getting the cars in shape, drilling, etc. There is work around the barracks which we all pitch in and help with, such as "cleaning house," peeling spuds, carrying water, etc.

If you think we are poorly fed, just listen to this. I just got up from a dinner at which the following was inflicted on us: ham, *French-fried* new potatoes, lettuce salad, *strawberries*, *cherries*, bread and jam. What do you think of that? Well, yes, I'll admit it was the best meal we have had in camp, but whoever heard of a soldier getting strawberries with his rations? We are surely well fed. I have never enjoyed better health. But say—I'll never be weaned from little U. S. Here's what I dream about when I dream about feed: Home-made bread, *Butter*—Jelly!! Pie—ice cream—and say—did such a thing as beefsteak ever exist or is that just an idea I had? I'm not complaining one bit, for I'm mighty glad I'm here, but—well, I'll sure be glad to get home with you all, and eats have the least to do with those sentiments.

We have had some mighty interesting experiences here at camp and on our trips in spite of the

comparative inactivity at the front. Only last night at midnight we were awakened by the sound of shrapnel bursting and machine-gun fire. Some of us got up and went out to investigate and found the cause of the disturbance to be a German aeroplane flying in this vicinity; dozens of powerful searchlights surrounded the camp at a radius of probably a mile. These moved back and forth searching the darkness for the intruder. Star shells were sent up now and then to help in the illumination. The German flew low over camp. We could not see him, but he caused considerable commotion and some excitement.

A few days ago up near the front we witnessed an air fight between a German and two French planes. After doing some damage the German got away safe. It was a fast and exciting game while it lasted. Not long ago a German plane was dropped in full view of our camp and I saw (a few days later) a French observation balloon go up in smoke, the occupants landing safely in parachutes. There is much activity in the air, there being many "flying" camps near here. I have seen as many as twenty aeroplanes in the air at once and nearly every day

one sees an enemy plane being fired at. It is only occasionally that a ground gun hits one, but they make them keep high up in the air and thus lessen their chances of taking photographs of value.

As to the actual fighting on the ground we see but little of it. Our trucks supply, almost exclusively, the artillery which is located back of or at the third line trenches. We carry the stuff as close as possible to the guns—usually, because of topography, from one-fourth to one-half mile back, and the stuff is transported forward by mules, burros, etc. We sometimes walk up to the guns and watch them operate and an interesting sight it is. The 75's are neat little guns which fire up to twenty-four shells a minute. The first time I watched one fire I thought the concussion would drop me, and my ears rang for a week. It is hard to see how the gunners stand up under the strain for months at a time.

As far as we ourselves are concerned there seems to be but little danger to our persons. We do, of course, pass through territory that is being shelled, but the chances for the individual being hit are slight. The objective of the enemy

in these places back of the line is usually a bridge or road or important building. Knowing the location of these objects they aim by maps, etc., never by sight, as they are on hills out of sight of anything back of the French lines. So when a shell bursts alongside of a bridge over which the *convoy* is travelling and buries itself in the mud you say, "Missed it, you son of a gun!" and move on.

Often only a few cars go out at a time and it has come to be quite the thing to see which bunch can tell the wildest tale of adventure on returning to camp. All in all, this work is just an everyday grind out of which one who wishes to can get a great deal, but there is no hero stuff in the *camion* service and Kipling would have a hard time writing a poem on the thrills of a truck driver. Nevertheless I will have much to tell you when I return, about experiences which some of the boys have been through.

One of the looked-forward-to times is the time when we are considered filthy enough to warrant the expenditure of a little gasoline to transport us—to Heaven via the swimming hole. On these days we all pile into one of the trucks and go

to a wonderful spot in a little river a few miles from camp. Here we spend two hours in the double luxury of bathing and swimming. At these times we are a great curiosity to the wondering French. Clothed in nature's own we actually get wet all over and the French soldiers don't understand it. Well, we have the times of our lives on these occasions and the man who refuses to go is a social outcast until the next swim.

So you see our life here is a pleasant one. We work and play and eat and sleep and I for one am satisfied. I will indeed be glad, however, when this hellish affair in which we now are participating is over. It is such a waste, not alone in materials,—man will always be able to feed and clothe himself,—but what is more important, in souls; and not those souls which have passed on because of the war, but in those who still live and will be alive after peace is declared. Men cannot stay civilized under the conditions imposed on both French and German privates. Living in holes in the ground with nothing much left to live for; hating not only the enemy, but themselves and the civilization which made this

thing possible, they can't come out of this dirt, in which they have floundered for nearly three years, clean-hearted and straight. The thing has rotted the very core of the civilization they once knew.

It is hard to realize over there the misery which these people have so willingly suffered. Witness the story of the whole thing written on the face of one French soldier who has been through it and you have proof. My hope is that the United States will not send a few men—she must send millions of them if she does not wish to inflict on a few the suffering and stinting of the soul which all France has borne for all too long a time.

*June 18.* Was required to stop yesterday and take charge of five of the cars on convoy which left camp at 4 p.m. I said that we would reach camp at about 2 a.m., but didn't realize where we were going to unload when I said it. We landed back in camp at 5 this morning after the most interesting and exciting trip we have ever taken. Our trip went as I said it would up to the point where we waited for dark before proceeding. When we started out again we left intervals of one hundred yards between



*camions* and moved toward the front. We had never been to the town where we were expected to unload and soon found that it was closer to activities than we had ever been before. For the first time our entire convoy was in the region of shell fire.

Shells dropped in and about the town, which we found to be completely demolished and used only as an artillery base. As soon as we arrived we put the trucks in as safe places as possible and hurried into dug-outs, there to remain as long as the bombardment lasted. It was a most interesting experience and an eye-opener and a heart-breaker. Hundreds of men live or rather exist in this town under ground. They either dig out vast underground rooms or clean out the débris in a cellar under a fallen building and here put together beds and stay when not at the guns. The places are clean but damp and I can hardly realize how these men can keep their health through years of that kind of life.

During a lull Tinkham and Slim and myself went out into the dark and walked the "streets" of this one time beautiful village. Everywhere was wreckage; piles of stones which once were



buildings; shell craters fifteen feet across in the streets and yards; stark trees stripped by shells. Rats—the town was full of them and added to the ghastly impression which one received of the place. Well—things began to get hot again and we made for cover. At 1:30 in the morning we considered it safe to unload, so woke up the fellows and drove to the unloading station at one end of the town. Here we were unloaded by a gang of laborers and at 3 started back for the camp. Somehow, although I was mighty glad to have been on the trip, it seemed good to get out of that hell hole and as we travelled back into the more quiet country and watched the sun rise and breathed the cool, clean morning air there were many thoughtful faces in that bunch of usually so light-hearted fellows.

Arriving in camp at 5 this morning I found your fine letter waiting for me. It came in last night when I was out on the job—coming home as I did nothing could have been more welcome and refreshing than the good news from the best of sisters. I'll sure write to you in the very near future. Truly I'm a lucky sinner—so many good things happen to me—and the best things

that happen to me here are the letters from you all with the good news from home.

Apropos of being lucky you will be interested to know that I was promoted Sergeant while on the job last night. Our First Sergeant was made Chief of one of the new sections the day before with the rank of Lieutenant, and so they pushed me up a peg. I now have charge of one of the two *rames* in the *convois* and in the barracks.

Some of the boys are beginning to get clippings from the papers in the States telling in the wildest manner possible the most impossible tales about this Service. Every time one of the exaggerated items is received a disgusted and disappointed crowd is the result. We are glad to get the clippings, but are sorry that the dope cannot be handed out straight. Take what the papers say about this Service or any other with a grain of salt. France is too deeply buried in this horrible mud called war to be greatly affected by the arrival in its midst of a little group of 'American boys, even though we do hail from Cornell.

What gets me is that most of the articles print CORNELL and AMERICA and then follows a lot

of piffle about Captain Tinkham and his bunch of sturdy Cornell men going into the battle, cheered by the French and English soldiers as they march into the trenches. Imagine a Pierce 5-ton truck marching into the trenches! I'm proud of the Cornell section, however, for it is American to the core, first and last. The other day a — College section arrived here. Jumping out of the truck a *cheer leader* jumped upon a box and led a lusty "rah, rah —" yell. I was surprised and more than pleased at the reception this demonstration received at the hands of our own boys. They simply rolled on the ground with laughter and jeered the "prep school stuff" down. It was rough on the new bunch, for they are fine lads, but I think they learned the lesson which many of our men needed—that it is no longer — or Cornell or XYZ fraternity, but a man's game from the word go.

## XXIV

*June 25, 1917.*

SINCE my last letter written on the 16th, I haven't received a word from home. The mails are surely mighty slow, so I'm still hoping that tonight will bring better luck. I haven't a great deal of news this time, for our routine has been about the same every day, but I'll get this started so as to have my stride when the big mail comes in and I have the fun of answering the home letters.

First, being in a particularly selfish mood, I'll begin by telling about myself. I guess I told you in my last letter of my promotion. I am now a Sergeant—some Sergeant—what? Well, a few days ago I was told the welcome news that I would be one of the five men of our section to go to Meaux. I told you of Meaux once, but had no idea that my chance would come so soon. It is there that men are trained to become officers of transport sections,—so if I make good, my next step will be Lieutenant in charge of a section—I surely intend to work for it. We leave here on July 1st, and remain at the school five weeks.

We will get intensive training in maps, roads, etc.—engine troubles and engines—magnetos, etc.—drill, organization of the army and of transportation, etc. Just a general intensive course to fit the men for the work in the field! Rusty goes with us, so I'll have a mighty good companion. I surely am glad for him—and for myself that he is going.

*June 26.* Evening. Here I am again after another day of inactivity. Usually when we do not go out on the road we are kept fairly busy around the barracks, but today we almost had a day off. Up at seven. Then after breakfast we peeled potatoes—which was as usual quite a party. The fellows all gather round a big sack of spuds and talk. Once in a while a peeled potato finds its way into the pan. Then the boys played ball against one of the other sections and I couldn't resist the temptation to go out and watch the game. It was sure fun and "we" won 11 to 4.

We have dinner at 11, when in camp. After dinner three of us walked up to town and had a bath at the infirmary, where there is a fine hot water shower bath rigged up. It is located in a

stable, but it is a great luxury. In town we found a woman who had strawberries to sell and we jumped at the chance. She took us to her "home" in a loft over the shower, where she and her husband told us of their three sons.

It is the story of thousands of mothers and fathers here. The two of them were forced out of their peasant home when the Germans made their first advance over this territory. One of the sons was killed at Verdun, one is a prisoner in Germany now and has been since 1914. The other is a cavalryman active at the front now. There can be few happy moments for that good woman. Well, we bought the berries and took them to a "store," where we sat down and munched cookies and ate strawberries to our heart's content. On returning to camp I just lazed around until supper time and that brings me up to now.

I saw the postman come and go again tonight with nothing for me. I am consoled by the knowledge that when he does come with my mail there will be a great deal of it. I do long for word from you all.

*July 1st.* I have been so busy since starting

this letter that this is my first chance to get back to it. Let me tell you what I have been doing and you will understand.

Wednesday night I was told to be ready at 6 a.m. Thursday for a trip to Paris to arrange for the officers' school. We—that is those chosen from the several sections—started in a bunch, eighteen of us. Arrived at Paris about noon, we went to the Field Service office, were sworn in, and then had a day and a half to ourselves, which we spent seeing Paris. I had many errands to do for the boys in my section out at the front. The time passed all too rapidly and we had to leave Paris again. We landed here last night, had supper at a beautiful old hotel and then were taken out to camp. I sure am the lucky boy—and for the life of me I can't figure out what I have done to deserve all the good things that come my way.

This school is a wonder. It has been running since the beginning of the war, but up to a few weeks ago only French officers were trained here. The school is on the barracks style and is strictly military in its routine, but as to equipment it is ideal. Our course starts tomorrow so

I can't tell about the work, but it has a wonderful reputation for efficiency. It will mean five weeks of work (back to college again), and those who pass the course will obtain commissions in the Field Service. There is a possibility of the United States taking over the Service, in which case Americans graduated from Meaux would get commissions in the United States Army.

This whole thing is so sudden as far as I am concerned and I know so little about the school that I will reserve the details of my new experience for my future letters.

This letter I must close and get off to you. I am certainly pleased with the news of the activity in the United States. Troops are already arriving in France and on talking to some of the regulars (marines and army) in Paris I was more than pleased, in fact proud, to learn of the seriousness with which the United States is taking the all too serious situation. I sure hope to be a *regular* myself—soon.

I am hoping to hear from you all soon. Here's lots of love to you all and best of wishes.



## XXV.

*July 8, 1917.*

THIS is Sunday night and the end of the first week in the new camp. It has been a week full of interest and profitable employment. I certainly consider myself fortunate in having been chosen as one of the twenty Americans here.

The finest thing that happened was the arrival of two good letters from home. It was a long wait, but it certainly was worth it, for I had received no word from the States since the middle of June.

Dad, here's to company A! That is the spirit that is going to win this war. If every one will give to the extent that it is in his power to give, in whatever form he is able, it will not be long before the boys in khaki can finish their round trip. What you call doing "your bit," Dad, is as essential and as big a thing as a man's bit who qualifies and goes to the front. I can't express the pride I take in the spirit you show and have shown throughout this crisis. Let me know more about the things that Uncle Sam is

doing. Where do you fellows get together? Are the people really heart and soul behind this war? etc., etc. I tell you this thing is more serious than most people think—almost *everything* depends on the United States and she came in just in time. I know that this is so.

We have entered on a grim, serious business and the length of time we will be in it depends absolutely on the attitude of our people. We must keep cool and make the fewest possible mistakes, but we must work fast and hard. We are up against a big game—a miserable affair—if we blunder there is no telling where or when we will end. If the people over there will get just one word fixed in their minds much good will be accomplished and that word is—"Serious"! This is not child's play—this is not San Juan Hill, this is WAR—*real war*,—and the mere fact that the United States is in it will not decide the outcome. The United States must realize that she is up against the stiffest proposition she has ever been required to face and she must act accordingly.

Politics must not be permitted to operate in the selection of men to officer,—or in any of the

military operations. I hope the training camps are free entirely from its influence. France looks to the United States for *big* things. France is depending on us and we must not disappoint her.

I'll tell you now how I am situated here, at the Officers' School. The school is located just outside of this very beautiful city. It was started at the beginning of the war for the purpose of training French non-coms. as officers in the Automobile Service of the armies. Up to two months ago only Frenchmen were trained here, but on the United States declaring war the French Army requested the Field Service to branch into transport work and on accepting the new responsibility, Field Service men became eligible (on qualifying) for the French Officers' School. The school lasts five weeks each session and is usually full to capacity. We are only the second bunch of Americans to enter, and are twenty in number.

There are 150 Frenchmen here, but our work being in English we have our own barracks, study rooms, and shops. The camp consists of one big office and supply shack 80 ft. x 20 ft., one dining shack to accommodate 200 men (and the meals are good), and eight barracks 80 x 20 ft. We

have one of these. At the end of it is a wash-room, then two rows of beds—ten on a side. Then a partition with a door leading into our lecture-study room, which is about 20 ft. by 30 ft., and arranged with blackboards, long tables, and benches. Here we receive long lectures on the technique of the automobile, lectures on the organization of the French Army with particular reference to the Automobile Service; lectures on topography and map reading, and practice in the same; lectures on organization of automobile units, on sanitation, food, and care of men; on duties of an officer in respect to his work and his men; on convoy and road work, etc., etc.

Then there is a big amphitheatre, which we of Cornell call Bailey Hall, which seats the entire camp, and there are given lectures on engine mechanics, etc. There are three long shops containing automobiles and parts of every kind used in the French Army. There we get practical work in taking down machines, every part of which we are required to draw, after which we reassemble the machines and put them in working order.

There, too, we get lectures on shop practice. We get demonstrations in welding, soldering, and

brazing—general repairs, etc. The whole course is given with the aim of giving the men, who are to officer units or sections, the knowledge essential to hold down the job most efficiently. There are two other long shacks used as study rooms for the Frenchmen, and that completes the list of structures. All the shacks are made of one thickness of wood with cinder floors and are very comfortable, though I don't see how the poor fellows exist who take this course in winter.

Every other day we go out on a road trip and get practice in the handling of the convoy on service. Each man gets a turn as officer of the day and takes full charge of the doings in camp during his day on. The other days we drill and each gets a turn at handling the unit on the march. We are up at 5 a.m. Breakfast at 6 and then lectures, shop, drill or convoy until 6 in the evening. After supper until 10 is the study hour and we usually use it. There are notes to copy, drawings to make, etc., etc., so that I can truthfully say that I have never put in such long hours (except when I took Spanish). But, though long, the hours are most profitable and interesting. Though only a five weeks' course

it is exceedingly intense and thoroughly practical. Were I given the choice between this and Plattsburg I would take this, for we have seen and are seeing the methods actually used at the front and I do not think Plattsburg can equal the actual reality. All of which means only that I am satisfied. If I pass the course here I will have the same rank as a French Lieutenant. If the States takes over this service (as I hope it will) there is a possibility of those who get by here retaining the same positions under the Stars and Stripes.

We are in a wonderful part of France. If you will look up the advance of the French offensive you will realize just why. Here and in this vicinity thousands of lives were lost in the Battle of the Marne in the defense of Paris. The country in this immediate vicinity is bristling with historic interest. When we were told that we Americans would have a holiday on the Fourth of July, three of us,—Rusty, Baker, and myself,—rented bicycles and while the rest went to Paris we wandered all over the map, visiting all the towns included in the Battle of the Ourcq. It was a wonderful day in every respect. The scenery about here is exquisite—and we just took

our time over beautiful roads, into towns every roof of which is of red tile, along the Marne and the Ourcq, stopping at interesting points, talking "French" to people along the way and learning much of interest. I am not allowed to name the towns, for some reason or other, but I have a postcard collection of the whole thirty miles, which I'll bring back with me and then I can tell you all about it.

The 14th is the big French holiday and we get Saturday and Sunday off then. We hope to make a two-day trip at that time to we don't know where yet, but feel that Paris would be a waste of time when we have an opportunity to see places now which will cover pages of history in the future.

Well, that is about all the news. I'll be here until August 4th, after which time I don't know where I'll be. Better send mail to T. M. V. 526, until further notice and don't forget to put on *Convois Automobiles*. My mail will be forwarded to me.

I am sending a couple of pictures of myself along just to show what I look like on the job and off. One was taken at the barracks at

T. M. V. 526. The other was taken by one of the boys somewhere on the road to the front. The helmet is of steel, which when near the front, we are required to wear. The gas mask over my left shoulder is another required appendage and the map case on my right side contains military maps of the country in which the convoy is working. There is one of each for each family if you wish.

Well, I must close this and get to work. I shall write more often while here. Am enjoying the best of health and have nothing to complain about and everything to be thankful for. Here's hoping this finds you all well and happy. My love to you all.



*The Writers of the Letters are:*

- I-XI. E. H. PATTISON, *Cornell.*
- XII-XIII. J. L. ROTHWELL, *Cornell.*
- XIV. H. BYRD, *Washington.*
- XV. E. I. TINKHAM, *Cornell.*
- XVI. D. HINRICHS, *Cornell.*
- XVII. A. SHERRY, *Cornell.*
- XVIII. R. E. MACKENZIE, *Cornell.*
- XIX. I. HALL, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*
- XX. R. DURLAND, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*
- XXI-XXV. R. A. BROWNING, *Cornell.*



















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